

**Abstract 387****TITLE:** HIV Risk in a Cohort of Lesbians in a Low/Mid Risk County**AUTHORS:** A Silvestre, N Markovic, DJ Aaron, ME Danielson, JE Janosky, & NJ Schmidt**PROBLEM:** Reports from the AMA and IOM show that a proportion of lesbians do not seek health care on a regular basis. A field study of 444 lesbians in 1996 in Pittsburgh showed that 47% of them did not disclose their sexual orientation to their primary health care provider.**METHODS:** Data from ESTHER (Epidemiologic Study of Health Risk) project, a community based survey of 1,152 women who partner with women in Allegheny County, PA were analyzed. Women were recruited using mailing lists, friendship networks, and public venues in order to describe demographic and HIV risk differences.**RESULTS:** Women recruited by mailing [n=418, 36%], networks [n=427, 37%], and public venues [n=282, 24%] were different from each other in a number of ways. Women recruited at public venues tended to be younger, with less education, lower incomes, report currently smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol, and having ever used injection drugs. Women recruited via friendship networks tended to be older, while racial and ethnic minority women were under represented among the mailing list participants. Data suggest that significant numbers of the sample engaged in behaviors associated with HIV risk. Among all participants, 9% of the sample self identified as bisexual, 28% reported ever being pregnant. 14% reported engaging in nonconsensual sex and 5% reported injection drug use. Rates of HIV risk factors varied among the recruitment groups, with those recruited at public venues reporting the greatest frequencies of factors related to HIV risk (30%) and those recruited from friendship networks reporting the lowest frequencies of factors (21%).**CONCLUSIONS:** It appears that lesbians recruited for HIV prevention interventions or research will significantly differ according to the method of recruitment. The data also suggest that while lesbians might not be at high risk of HIV infection due to their same-sex behaviors, a proportion of lesbians are at high-risk due to other factors. Reaching these lesbians with prevention interventions will require specialized programs utilizing members of the lesbian community in the design and execution of the research. Particular care must be taken to include a diverse population that mirrors the HIV epidemic.**PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION****Name:** Anthony J. Silvestre, Ph.D.**Address:** 3520 Fifth Avenue Suite 400  
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